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Letter dated 24 November 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to your attention the following:

While the Cyprus Government ardently protects places of worship belonging to all faiths in Cyprus, Turkey has not so far complied with its obligations under international law and United Nations resolutions on this issue. The most recent violation has been the erection of a mosque in Kythrea on land belonging to Maria Nicolaidou Longinou, a Greek Cypriot refugee now living in the free areas. Moreover, the mosque being built occupies a part of the ground of St. Marina Church which adjoins the property of Mrs. Longinou.

The Turkish occupied area of Cyprus contains not only a large part of the island's rich archaeological heritage but also churches, monasteries and other religious sites and monuments which are subjected daily to severe and extreme destruction of unprecedented extent and proportions. I take this opportunity to point out that this usurpation of private land and the looting of the cultural and religious heritage of Cyprus has been continuing since 1974, with the result that over 100 churches and monasteries have been looted and plundered of their sacred treasures.

Unfortunately, the efforts so far of the various international organizations and leading personalities in art and culture have not resulted in the prevention of the destruction and wanton exportation of Cyprus' heritage which forms part of the religious and cultural patrimony of the world. Given the new international environment which places protection and safeguarding of human rights, including cultural ones, at the centre of United Nations activities, we reiterate the request that necessary steps be taken to respond

more effectively to the challenge of putting an end to such anachronistic policies by Turkey.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sotos ZACKHEOS
Ambassador,
Permanent Representative